

**ABSTRACT**

The invention provides for compounds comprising nucleotide sequences 5'-P-N<sup>1</sup>-N<sup>2</sup>-G-N<sup>3</sup>-C-I-3' and 3'-Q-N<sup>4</sup>-N<sup>5</sup>-N<sup>6</sup>-N<sup>7</sup>-N<sup>8</sup>-N<sup>9</sup>-Y-J-5' that are the generic sequences of a mIRES of an HCV genome, and variants thereof. The invention also provides assays that  
5 utilise the compounds of the invention, including assays for detection of HCV antiviral compounds.